

ROMANIAN ACADEMIC MARKETING. PRESENT AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract. *This study examines the evolution of the marketing topics in the academic curriculum of the Romanian universities. It is a historical insight into the now well developed field of study: Marketing. In the same time it is a tribute to our professors and researchers who devoted their efforts in developing a new and powerful academic domain.*

Key words: management, marketing, marketing school, Bologna process.

In the first decade of the third millennium, the Romanian academic marketing is a clearly defined domain of economic knowledge, both on a conceptual and operational basis, which allows us to categorize it, without any reserves, among the sciences of management of human activities. Its analysis field goes beyond the microeconomic sphere of the company, by being a multidimensional concept, which can allow approaches from different points of view.

If we concentrate only on the economic organization, the marketing represents:

- an modern economic concept referring to the permanent orientation of the company toward the market
- an aggregate of methods and scientific techniques used for targeting the strategic objectives of the company
- an instrument of scientific management
- a practical activity through which the company can adapt itself to the market's exigencies
- a function of the company which can be found as a distinct department in the organizational chart of the company (Pop, 2001, p. 8-9).
- a "young" managerial science, which dispose of a theory on the structure of its conceptual system, of working scientific methods, as well as of its own acknowledged language (Florescu, 1987, p. 65).
- We consider that one of the most synthetic definitions, designed to show the multivalency of the concept in discussion is the title of a specialized paper, belonging to a famous European professor (Meffert, 2000), which defines marketing as being „the management of the market-orientated company”.

Even if it is focusing mostly on the problems of how the company can manage efficiently its limited economic resources, with the purpose of maximizing their net results, the marketing extended its application domains also to the organizations

without a financial aim. Its approaches are today recognized not only at a micro- level, but also at a macro- level or at a worldwide social level.

Limited to the contemporary dynamics of ideas and information circulation at a worldwide level, *the theory and the practice of marketing* developed by the academic environment have gained and consolidated their right as being one of the independent Romanian sciences.

Any retrospective and prospective step to a knowledge domain requests to characterize its “roots”. We will not refer to the marketing’s evolution at an international (A rigorous step can be found in specialized Romanian literature: Cătoi, 1978; Meffert, 2003, pp. 318-321) level, but we intend to mark succinctly the contribution of three pioneers of science and practice in this field in Romania. Benefiting from being, for a long period of time, near them, it is now a great honor and privilege to evoke their personality.

The university professors Mihai C. Demetrescu, Petre Mălcome and Constantin Florescu, three masters of the Romanian economic science, have contributed essentially, through their insistent research in the knowledge field, through measures of materialization of the concepts but also through their pedagogical vocation, to the lasting foundation of what with a great pride we call today the Romanian School of Marketing.

Professor Mihai C. Demetrescu (1919-2001) eminent scholar and erudite encyclopedist was an enthusiast of mathematical statistics applied in economics. He makes through his work “The elasticity of the demand of goods”, Academy Publishing House, Bucharest 1968, the first general presentation of the population’s consumption in Romania using the coefficients of elasticity. A year later, with his work “Marketing – market analysis”, Political Publishing House, Bucharest, the term of marketing becomes, for the first time in Romania, the title of a specialized writing.

His research in the field of application of entropy in the analysis of the economic structures is intertwining with the use of the method of measuring their cohesion (Demetrescu, 2001, p. 408-409), with practical developments in the field of marketing research.

Creator of the Institute of Commercial Research and university professor at the Academy of Economic Studies, Bucharest, he was the foundation member of AROMAR – the Romanian Marketing Association – the first association in this field, which reunites all specialists from the field of marketing, from the academic environment, from research and practical activity.

His vocation for interdisciplinary communication made professor Demetrescu a highly appreciated and respected speaker at the countless prestigious international sessions at which he participated, either in USA, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland or Italy. During the last decades of the 20th century, the studies published in prestigious specialized magazines, as *Revue Française du Marketing* (France), *Il Milimetro* (Italy), *Industrial Marketing Management* (The

Netherlands), The European Marketing Research Review (United Kingdom) and many others, made him famous overseas as the most important personality of the Romanian marketing. His papers that were published in the Scientific Publishing House “Quantitative methods in marketing” and “The analysis of the marketing systems” make him a valid promoter of the quantitative research not only for the market study, but also for the relationship between marketing and the economic development. The process of applying the general theory of systems in marketing benefited with the help of professor Demetrescu, of a natural field of experiment which validated his flexible capacity also in the Romanian environment. The last 10 years of his life, professor Mihai C. Demetrescu dedicated to the foundation of a new academic institution – University of Oradea – that welcomed him with affection, where he founded a doctors’ school, giving his full passion for the marketing theory and practice to his followers, as he did in Bucharest.

During the long discussion I had the opportunity to have with the master, gave me the joy and satisfaction to discover new values of a enormously strong personality, a researcher always ready to share with the ones willing to learn from his rich scientific experience.

Professor Petre Malcomete (n. 1928) set the basis of the first specialized department in the capital of Moldova, founded in 1971 at the Technical University „Gr. Asachi” in Iasi. He managed to gather a group of enthusiastic and experienced teachers, in the unfriendly situation of the Romanian economy of those times, with whom he found himself fighting for the development of market research and marketing policies in the garment industry, beyond „...the space left by the macroeconomic planning activity”. The papers coordinated by Professor Malcomete „Marketing and economic growth” Junimea Iasi, 1972, „Marketing Strategies”, Junimea Iasi, 1976, „Marketing Dictionary”, Junimea Iasi, 1979, set the basis of a valid marketing collection among the academic literature in that domain.

The practical development required a continuous team work and the training of a large number of work forces, able to pick up the market information. This was done with the help from the students from Iasi, which showed a great potential to investigate. Professor Malcomete, beyond his focus on exploring the methods and techniques of marketing research, was the initiator and coordinator of a few national scientific reunions related to the academic environment and marketing research, that in the meantime, became traditional due to its periodical consistency and represented valid „color spots” on the daily routine of 80’s, which was not very open to a marketing thinking.

Due to this faith and constancy, Professor Malcomete got involved, after Romania took the way of a market economy, in the academic construction within the University Foundation „Gh. Zane” from Iasi and the university with the same name, that he has founded and lead in a very good way.

The manner, in which I had the opportunity to work with Professor Malcomete, on the market dictionary that was published a few years ago, was a sort of theoretical dialog, in which the focus was put on ideas and not on words. His availability for a professional collaboration at his age rises up lots of admiration.

Professor Constantin Florescu (1928-2004) was the founder of the marketing school in Bucharest, being in charge of the department with the same name, also founded in 1971 at the Academy of Economic Studies. He consolidated his school guide position, due to some memorable contributions. Some of those were (Pop, 2004, pp. 235-240):

- The development of the demand of goods and the quantification mechanism of the influencing factors
- The development of the theoretical base for the manufacturing market, and for the product market
- Formulation, in a original manner, of the marketing functions
- Differentiation between the market research at the concept level and operational level
- Formulating the concept of the market strategy and making this the center piece of the marketing policies
- The development of the approach of market strategies, as an entity with multiple faces that respond to a common goal
- The development of the decision making mechanisms in certain, arbitrary, undetermined and competition environment.

Some new thoughts of professor Florescu, on marketing meta-theory, were published in a specialized paper (Florescu, 1987, pp. 63-72).

Having always in mind the theory of the things well done (he used to quote Tadeusz-Kotarbinski with his „Treaty of things well done”), professor Florescu was always preoccupied by the power of his personal example, during the process of scientific awareness, in order to be able to bring to his collaborators a correct way of judgment and action. The fact that he tried to make the difference between the urgent problems and the important ones, and the fact that he tried to give his attention to the last ones, allowed him to develop a strategic vision about the economic processes and phenomena. He advised his followers and his collaborators to follow a certain way of thinking, so that we can separate, when the case, the eternal things from the passing ones. In order to sustain the idea that at the beginning of every intervention on scientific research, there is some conception explanation, he has always quoted Rene Descartes with his famous quote: „... understand the meaning behind words and you will salvage the world from half of its wonderings”

In his desire to shape people’s characters for the better, Professor Florescu has always encouraged each generation whom he has taught, to believe in their own ideas and skilfully write them down, only after attentively having weigh the message they want to confer. Not once has he hesitated in supporting any of his students, PhD

students or colleagues' initiatives, which had as an ending goal to obtain the proper recognition by his fellow scholars.

Almost three decades have passed since I have known Professor Florescu, whether it has been as a student, a PhD student or a colleague of his. With the minute attention of a craftsman and a true master's intuition, he has guided my steps all through my formative years as Professor in the Romanian higher educational system. The message that professor Florescu leaves as inheritance to the generations to come is one of optimism, faith and hope, that Romanian creative power and intelligence shall stand out among others, thus bringing about progress and prosperity to his country. Being one of the founders of the Romanian Marketing School (today a highly competitive one) he has defined, developed and established its position in the international community.

Although the groundbreaking contribution of the above mentioned scholars is fully recognized, one must also mention the hard work of an important number of colleagues from the academic environment, whether they come from „Babeş Bolyai” University and the Technical University in Cluj-Napoca, or from The West University in Timisoara and „Al. I. Cuza” Univeristy in Iasi, The University in Craiova, „Transilvania” University in Brasov or „Dunărea de Jos” University in Galati. Besides the state universities, in the past decade many private universities were founded, such as: „Constantin Brâncoveanu” University in Pitesti, Vasile Goldiş” University in Arad, „Artifex” and „Spiru Haret” Univerities in Bucharest or the „Romanian-German” Univeristy in Sibiu, only to name the most important places where the indepth spirit of marketing and its core rules are transmitted by highly skilled professors to the thousands of students, all eager to work in a competitive business market. Twelve public and eight private universities in Romania, offer nowadays the possibility to study Marketing for a bachelor's degree. In addition to these, there also exist 20 Marketing Master Programmes provided in the Romanian academic environment (Cătoiu et al., 2006, pp. 3-9).

Currently there is a consensus among economic specialists regarding the actual maturity stage (Olteanu, 2007, pp. 4-5) reached by the Romanian academic marketing, which has its roots in the basic structure and principles found in international reference literature, while at the same time evolving through the integration of elements specific for economies in transition and having particular traits of the Romanian economy. It is significant to mention the remarkable development of certain marketing fields, of the most current importance, that has taken place during the last decade. Among these fields are: cyber marketing, relational marketing and direct marketing. Another interesting aspect is the development of fields which have not been considered to such a great amount before such as sanitary marketing, cultural marketing, ecclesiastic marketing or sports marketing.

Yet another proof of the Romanian marketing school maturity is the existence of a well known marketing literature that during the last 15 years, has registered over

400 distinct titles, released by national accredited publishing houses, in most cases written by university professors. Scientific magazines like „Marketing. Management – Studii – Cercetări – Consulting”, „Management & Marketing”, „Revista Română de Marketing” or „Marketing-on line”, that are symbols of an international exchange of ideas, are also a valuable addition to Romanian university marketing

One must also not neglect the dynamical changes that have taken place in the day-to-day marketing vocabulary especially with regard to the connection between demand and offer (Brătianu, 2006, pp. 18-19). However, it is only fair to mention that a number of marketing concepts seem to have been ingrained in the Romanian marketing vocabulary much too fast, in spite of our language having a proper synonym for many of them. A few noteworthy examples would be: „target” for „țintă”, „stakeholder” for „deținător de interese”, „public relation” for „relații publice”. Significant attention would be required from the academic environment with regard to the way such theoretical and internationally used concepts are being absorbed „tale quale” in the Romanian vocabulary, keeping their initial form. Besides this, there should also be a greater concentration on fields with high perspectives such as marketing research and development, analysis and diagnosis, consumer behaviour in opposition to the actual situation which is mainly oriented towards communication in general and towards advertising in particular. The momentarily spectacular effects of this field should not stop the development on a short and on a long term, of more and more differentiated ways of need satisfaction by the involvement of marketing

The consensus regarding the level of development that Romanian academic marketing has reached, presupposes aligning its main issues with its evolution on an international level. Evaluating the performances of our national academic environment has to be correlated with the way things are evolving on a global scale, and the effects of the instructive-educational process are efficiently validated by the most important judge – the labour market. This market is the true beneficiary of the „the academic marketing product”, the one that evaluates the real performances of a higher education degree in a certain field. The multiple classifications of the various marketing schools – controversial as they may be – represent significant steps towards establishing a quantitative and qualitative order of the performances (Cheng, Cai Liu, 2007, p. 25) achieved in a highly competitive world, which shows more and more characteristics of globalization.

As far as the future perspectives of Romanian marketing are concerned, we shall mention some of the aspects considered to be essential for its successful development.

- Firstly we point out the continuous effort of diminishing the distance between academic marketing and marketing used in the business world. To achieve this, should not be attempted by empirically emerging oneself in the academic environment, but by increasing the opportunities of using marketing in a practical way. This can be done more easily by consistently

promoting a strategic vision among the economic agents, with regard to their own evolution in an increasingly complex environment and global market. Such an approach shall lead to a real demand in the business world for studying marketing periodically and to stabilize the future evolutions of competitors on the market, in an increasingly unpredictable environment.

- The commercial act itself has changed, under the influence of the new informational technologies and communication changes. Thus long distances are no longer essential or discriminating in promoting exchanges. The usual distribution intermediaries are slowly being replaced by „infomediaries” –true informational brokers (Ridderstale, Nordstrom, 2007, p. 65), people or companies that eliminate the extra parts from the chain of value and by simultaneously becoming purchasing agents for clients and sales departments for suppliers. These transformations imposed by reality itself have to be included in the academic environment as well, through reconfiguration of the organizational systems according to new marketing demands. Without abandoning the goal of any economical organization – maximizing profit – should be understood and evaluated on a long term basis (a strategic perspective), keeping in mind the fact that increasingly dynamic changes occur in motivating a certain demand and implicitly in the period of time the client (Pop, Petrescu, 2008, pp. 30-37) remains loyal towards the organization, product, service or brand.

Having in mind the same contextual issues, the reanalyzing of the mechanism of decision making is required. This mechanism is nowadays sustained in Romania less and less by a single vector, which has a decisive role in the acquisition process: the price. In most cases demand is determined by considering the relation between quality and price. The future, which starts today, shall be decisively influenced by three factors in the purchasing decision: quality-price-degree of satisfaction. This does not automatically imply that the consumers would become more rational in their commercial choices. But it confirms that the bearers of the demand (either the economic agents or population) will get to know their needs better and definitely in a more analytical manner. As a consequence, the academic marketing research should be orientated towards methodological constructions in the shape of *early warning systems* (Esch, Hermann, Sattler, 2008, p. 380) that will depict the market's future behavior. This type of system requires the identification and the proper use of marketing controlling, which contains a complex *system of performance indicators* both qualitative and quantitative. Their role is to signal any predictable mutations in the competitive environment of the market where the company develops its activity. The use of such models, taken from developed countries, requires first of all their testing on the Romanian market and, if necessary, their adaptation to specific behavioral components.

- A solid truth is the fact that nowadays *differentiation is increasing the competitiveness*. The object of any competitive offer is more and more personalized through differentiation, having as main source, in most cases the *complementary service* that goes along with the offered good. Personalized modelling of an offer (as a result of switching from mass marketing to personalized marketing) cannot be obtained only through the individualization of design, but it will have to be accomplished by configuring the organizational systems of the company to marketing principles. As a consequence the academic marketing is required to impart knowledge to its future specialists on how to provide a better and/or differentiated product than that of the competition (Sickler, 2006, p. 23).
- The marketing school provides favorable grounds for *interdisciplinarity* due to the growth in complexity of the market processes and phenomena. The strengthening of this interdisciplinarity leads to the development of the *interactivity* in the process of teaching. The complex training of a marketer demands integrating marketing and management knowledge, and in the same time the development of a comprehensive field of communication and decision-making abilities. All these require a *certification of competences* in a certain field through an instrument called Organization Driving License, which has the purpose to confirm the degree of insight into the *marketing vision* of the user.

To fulfill this vision, the Romanian educational system ought to facilitate the intermixture of entrepreneurial education with the marketing one, in parallel with the expansion of the latter one in fields like technical, medical, artistical and sports.

All this efforts could lead to a profound *shift in mentality* among Romanian decision makers sweeping away a large part of the *malpractice* in the local business environment that still views marketing as a cost (Enea, 2005, pp. 314-317). Those that share this wrong vision would rather prefer acting in way which imitates competition rather than providing an original perspective, only because this one seems more complicated and demanding in terms of efforts and creativity.

The Romanian marketing schools is also a part of the vast and modeling process required by Romania's accession to the European Union. The profound changes in the market place (Thomas, Pop, 2007, pp. 203-207) are thus reflected in the efforts to harmonize the curricula at the continental level.

Complying with the Bologna Process, the marketing higher educational system is nowadays organized in three cycles (bachelor, master, and doctorate), and increased consistently its contents and the quality of its management. It is also mandatory that it acquires a superior *international visibility*. This cannot be reached by punctual efforts of participation – through schools representatives – at international conferences, but through establishing, under the supervision of a recognized and accepted authority, a calendar of the rather difficult and harder to enter, international

manifestations. These can range from the highest rank like the AMA (American Marketing Association) and the ESOMAR, to regional congresses and symposiums that aim common concerns of the Romanian academic environment.

The revival of the Romanian Marketing Association (AROMAR) – the most representative in its field – would create a favorable premise for sharing and applying ideas, by gathering leading Romanian marketing authorities from the academic, research and business environment.

The superior human potential that the Academic School of Marketing currently disposes represents the most obvious guarantee for its upward evolution and significant contribution to the overall progress of the Romanian higher educational system.

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